



GROWING SMARTER

*Water IQ campaign
raises awareness of water
sources, conservation*

The North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) has launched a “Water IQ: Know Your Water,” education campaign to help residents conserve water, providing North Texans with a goal they can embrace—reduce water use by 5 percent and save money on monthly water bills.

Lubbock and Austin are also implementing the campaign in their regions. Lubbock Water Utilities along with the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1 and the city of Austin along with Lower Colorado River Authority are challenging residents to use 10 percent less water. Both cities are prepared to show residents how to save water and are working towards raising residents’ water IQ.

To kick off its campaign, NTMWD chose a Plano couple—Mike and Candace Fountoulakis—to employ water-saving tips and reduce water-use by the target goal of 5 percent. NTMWD will work with the Fountoulakis’, who were featured in an educational video during outreach events, as they take the challenge and pledge to do their part to save water.

The Fountoulakis’ recorded water consumption from June through September 2006 showed a 6.3 percent reduction in water-use compared to the same months

in 2005, said Ted Burton, vice president of EnviroMedia, the public relations and advertising agency that developed the campaign.

“This is really great news,” Burton said, adding that he is pleased with their results since the Fountoulakis’ savings were about the same as the program’s goal.

The campaign was developed from research funded by the Texas Water Development Board. NTMWD—the first in Texas to launch the campaign—is working with EnviroMedia to participate in aggressive consumer outreach to educate businesses and individuals on the source of their water and how to conserve it.

“The public education campaign was launched the same day that Drought–Stage 3 was initiated for the area,” said Denise Hickey, NTMWD public relations coordinator, of the June 1, 2006 kick-off date.

The restrictions affected more than 1.6 million people in Collin, Dallas, Denton, Hunt, Kaufman and Rockwall counties. With the Drought–Stage 3 restrictions, residents are restricted to watering landscapes once every seven days. Outdoor watering with sprinklers is prohibited from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and residents cannot wash vehicles with a hose or

drain and refill swimming pools, except to replace normal water loss.


A press conference in the Fountoulakis' front yard on June 1, the first day of mandatory water restrictions throughout the region, illustrated the water-saving contributions the district is asking of all North Texans. Stations were set up demonstrating sensible, easy tips for outdoor water use that residents can implement around the home such as raising the height of lawn mower blades and using soaker hoses, as well as swimming pool tips and explanations on how to read water bills.

EnviroMedia originally conducted statewide research in 2004 on behalf of the governor's Water Conservation Implementation Task Force.

"Based on that research, we found that only 28 percent of Texans knew the natural source of their water," Burton said.

Once they knew where their water came from, 87 percent polled said that they would be much more likely to conserve and save water, he said.

Servicing 1.6 million people in 60 cities, towns, special utility districts and water-supply corporations, the NTMWD is educating locals on their primary water source, Lake Lavon, which reached dangerously low levels in 2006. Lake Lavon was constructed in 1948, shortly before the 1950s drought, when there was a high concern for dwindling water supplies in the area. Today, North Texans are facing the same drought conditions. The National Weather Service reported that 2005 was the driest year on record in North Texas since the '50s.

The Water IQ campaign provides simple and cost-effective tips to conserve water, and it is focus-group tested. For more information and to identify your water source, visit <http://www.wateriq.org/>. 

The campaign offers ten easy water-saving tips to help consumers use less water at home or at the office:

- Use 5 percent less water. Read your latest utility bill and note how many gallons you consumed. Simply multiply the number of gallons by .05—that's your 5 percent goal (i.e.: 8,000 gallons X .05 = 400 gallons).
- Water your lawn 1 inch every seven days.
- Water your lawn in the early morning or at night. Mid-day watering results in fast evaporation and scorches your lawn and plants.
- Operate your in-ground sprinkler system manually—don't use the timer.
- If you own a pool, pay close attention to the water level.
- Use plenty of mulch in flower beds, experts recommend 4 to 6 inches to prevent evaporation and keep soil moist.
- Choose "water wise" or native Texas plants such as lantana, salvia and Mexican sage.
- Raise your lawn mower blade and cut grass to a height of 3 inches—this shades the soil, which reduces evaporation and allows roots to grow deeper.
- Check for leaks in taps, pipes and hoses.
- Use soaker hoses instead of sprinklers to water trees, shrubs and beds more efficiently.